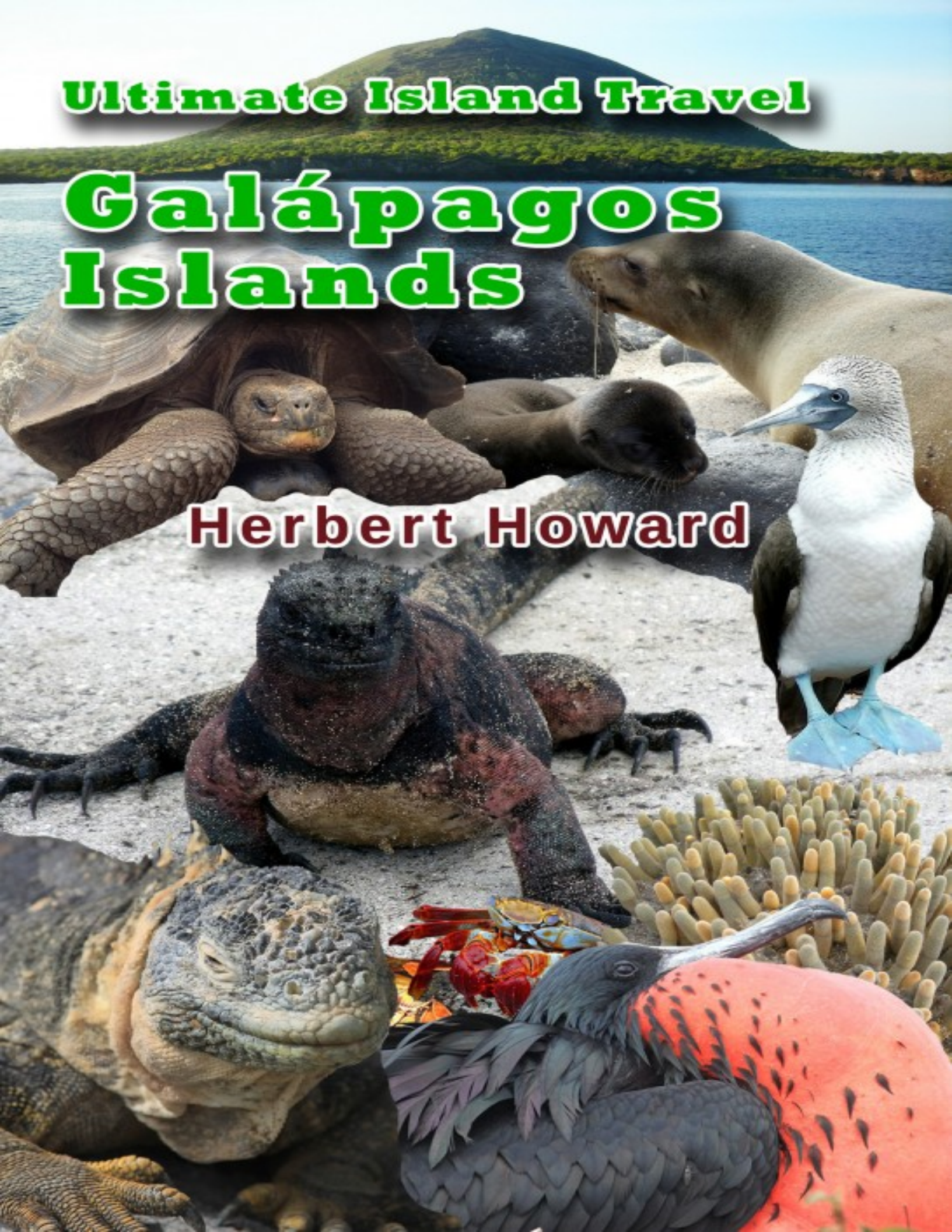
Ultimate Island Travel
Galápagos Islands
Herbert Howard

Ultimate Island Travel – Galápagos Islands

By
Herbert Howard
SMASHWORDS EDITION

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Galápagos

A trip to the Galapagos (UNESCO World Heritage Site) is a unique and unforgettable nature experience. What this destination requires is a spirit of adventure and a love of nature. The cruise ships are exploration vessels and are very comfortable, but do not expect a Caribbean-style cruise ship. The highlights are nature, conservation, bird watching.

These Islands are a living museum of evolutionary changes, come along with me and discover a wide variety of exotic species exclusive to this Archipelago.

As you wander over boulders, lava flows, sandy beaches, brush, and more, you'll observe the unique and often unusual characteristics of island birds, reptiles, mammals, and fish – species not found anywhere else in the world – witnessing firsthand the subtleties of evolution that helped to inspire Darwin.

There are 15 islands to visit in this wonderful travel vacation. To explore these islands, you go by water. You can go on cruises or go by boat to different islands.

Geography

The Galápagos Islands are an archipelago of volcanic islands distributed around the equator in the Pacific Ocean west of continental Ecuador. Wildlife is its most notable feature with it forming a national park and biological marine reserve. Each island has a variety of different animals.

Language

The principal language is Spanish.

Population

The islands have a population of approximately 23,000 people.

The Galapagos Islands Are A Group Of Islands

14 Major Islands, 6 Minor Islands And 42 Islets

Baltra Island / South Seymour Island
Bartolomé Island / Bartholomew Island
Darwin Island / Culpepper Island

Española Island / Hood Island
Floreana Island / Charles Island / Santa María Island
Genovesa Island / Tower Island
Isabela Island / Albemarle Island (Ecuador)
Marchena Island / Bindloe Island
North Seymour Island
Pinzón Island / Duncan Island
Pinta Island / Abingdon Island
Rábida Island / Jervis Island
San Cristóbal Island / Chatham Island
Santa Cruz Island / Indefatigable Island
Santa Fé Island / Barrington Island
Santiago Island / San Salvador Island / James Island
Wolf Island / Wenman Island
Daphne Major
South Plaza Island
Nameless Island

Climate

The Humboldt Current brings cold water to the Galápagos islands causing frequent drizzling.

June To November (The Garua)

The temperature by the sea is 72 °F
Steady and cold winds blow from south and southeast
Frequent drizzling lasting most of the day
Dense fog conceals the islands

December To May

The sea and air temperature is 77 °F
No wind
Sporadic, strong rains
Sunshine

Wildlife Found In The Galapagos

Like the animals on land, the creatures that inhabit the waters around the Galapagos have not evolved with a sense of fear of humans, and your

presence will seem no more than a curiosity to them.

Reptiles

Land iguanas, lava lizards, geckos and harmless snakes can also be found on the Galápagos islands.

Tortoises

The most popular of the reptiles are the Galapagos Tortoises, which have been featured on television shows and magazine articles. The Galápagos tortoise is the largest living species of tortoise and 10th-heaviest living reptile.

The Galápagos tortoise has a life span in the wild of over 100 years.

Turtles

The Galápagos green turtle is a subspecies of the green sea turtle. It is endemic to the tropical and subtropical waters of the Pacific Ocean.

Land Iguanas

The Galapagos Land Iguana is a species of lizard. It is endemic to the Galápagos Islands.

It is primarily found on the islands of:

Fernandina Island
Isabela Island
Santa Cruz Island
North Seymour Island
Hood Island
South Plaza Island

Marine Iguanas

The dragons of the Galapagos – the marine iguanas – clamber over each other and settle to sun themselves piled claw on head and spurting salt water from their nostrils.

The Marine Iguana is an iguana found only on the Galápagos Islands that has the ability, unique among modern lizards, to live and forage in the sea.

The Iguana can dive over 30 ft into the water. It mainly lives on the rocky Galápagos shore, but can also be spotted in marshes and mangrove beaches.

Lava Lizards

There are 22 species of Lava Lizards, 9 of these are endemic to the Galápagos Islands.

Mammals

The Galápagos islands have everything that range from sea lions, humpback whales, sperm whales, killer whales, bottle nosed dolphins and the common dolphin.

Humpback Whales

The humpback whale is a species of baleen whale. The humpback has a distinctive body shape, with unusually long pectoral fins and a knobbly head.

Sea Fur Lions

The Galápagos sea lion is a species of sea lion that exclusively breeds on the Galápagos Islands. Their loud bark, playful nature, and graceful agility in water make them the "welcoming party" of the islands.

Birds

The Galapagos Islands also have over a dozen different kinds of land and sea birds for you to enjoy on your visit.

Endemic Birds To The Galápagos Islands

Galápagos Heron
Flightless Cormorant
Galápagos Hawk
Galápagos Rail
Galápagos Dove
Large-billed Flycatcher
Galápagos Mockingbird
Floreana Mockingbird
Hood Mockingbird
San Cristóbal Mockingbird
Large Ground-finch
Medium Ground-finch
Small Ground-finch
Sharp-beaked Ground-finch
Common Cactus-finch
Large Cactus-finch
Vegetarian Finch
Large Tree-finch
Medium Tree-finch
Small Tree-finch
Woodpecker Finch
Mangrove Finch
Green Warbler-Finch
Grey Warbler-Finch

Albatross

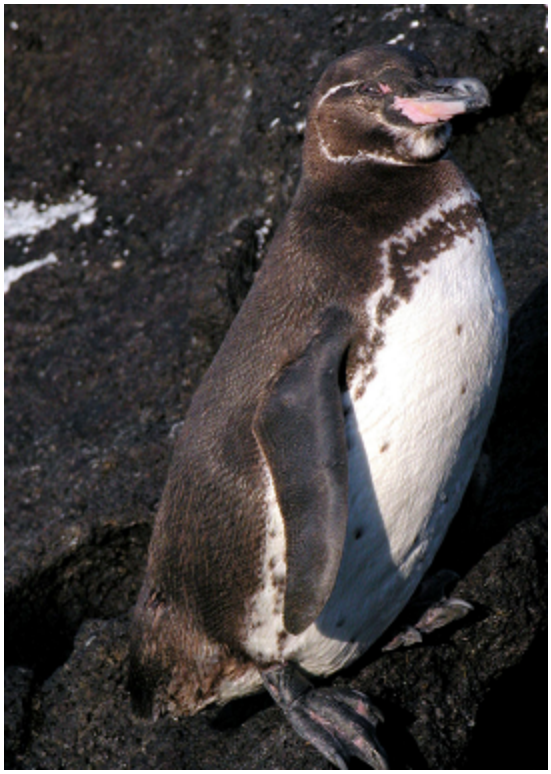
The only place the Waved Albatross nests, is on Española Island in the Galapagos islands.

During the non-breeding season, the albatross resides primarily in the areas of the Ecuador and Peruvian coasts.

Penguins

The Galapagos Penguin is endemic to the Galapagos Islands. It is the only penguin that lives north of the equator in the wild.

It is one of the banded penguins.



Blue Footed Boobies

The Blue-footed Booby is a long-winged seabird. The natural breeding habitat of the Blue-footed Booby is the tropical and subtropical islands of the Pacific Ocean and Galápagos Islands.

Red Footed Boobies

The Red-footed Booby is a large seabird. Adult birds always have red feet but the colour of the plumage varies.

They are powerful and agile fliers.

Flightless Cormorants

The Flightless Cormorant is also known as the Galapagos Cormorant. It is native to the Galapagos Islands. It is one of the world's rarest birds and is the subject of an active conservation program.

Storm Petrels

Storm petrels are seabirds. The flight is fluttering and sometimes bat-like. Storm petrels seem to “walk” across water.

Galapagos Petrels

The Galapagos Petrel is an endemic marine bird that nests in areas of high humidity in the highlands. They are found on the islands of islands San Cristóbal, Santa Cruz, Santiago, Floreana, and Isabela.

Darwin’s Finches

Darwin's finches are a group of 15 species of passerine birds. All the finches are only found on the Galápagos Islands.

The most important differences between species are in the size and shape of their beaks. The beaks are highly adapted to different food sources.

Greater Flamingos

Flamingos are wading birds found in both the Western and Eastern Hemispheres.

Tropicbirds

Tropicbirds are slender white birds of tropical oceans, with exceptionally long central tail feathers.

Frigatebirds

Frigatebirds are large seabirds. They are large birds and are black or black and white with long wings and deeply-forked tails.

The males have inflatable coloured throat pouches.

Nazca Boobies

The Nazca Booby is a booby which is found in the Galápagos Islands. Nazca boobies are known for practicing obligate siblicide.

Oystercatchers

The oystercatchers are large, obvious and noisy plover-like birds, with strong bills used for smashing or prising open molluscs.

Fish

Rays
Angelfish
Sharks
Invertebrates
Sally Lightfoot Crabs
Sea Urchins
Sea Cucumbers
Sea Anenomies
Star Fish
Dolphins

Plants In The Galapagos

Mangroves

Mangroves are various kinds of trees up to medium height and shrubs that grow in saline coastal sediment habitats.

Scalesia

Scalesia is endemic to the Galapagos Islands. It contains fifteen species that grow as shrubs or trees. All of the species have soft, pithy wood.

Scalesia species have been called "the Darwin's finches of the plant world" because they show a similarly dramatic pattern of adaptive radiation.

Sesuvium

Sesuvium is a genus of flowering plants in the ice plant family.

Saltbush

Saltbushes are extremely tolerant of the salt content in the ground. They retain salt in their leaves.

Beach Morning Glory

This is a common creeping vine. It grows on the upper parts of beaches and endures salted air. It is one of the most common and most widely distributed salt tolerant plants.

Prickly Pear Cactus

There are 6 different species of prickly pear cactus growing in the Galápagos islands. Where there are tall, trunked varieties there are also giant tortoises. The islands lacking tortoises have low or prostrate forms of Opuntia.

Lava Cactus

The lava cactus is a species of cactus and is a colonizer of lava fields, hence its name.

Galapagos National Park

In 1934 the Ecuadorian state proclaimed the first laws to protect the Galápagos islands. It was declared a National Park in 1959.

In1668 the Galapagos National Park Services was created to protect biodiversity. The Institution guarantees sustainable development in the whole extension of the islands.

In 1979 UNESCO declared the Galapagos Islands as Natural Heritage Site, in 1990 Whales Sanctuary, and recently, in the years 2001 the Galapagos Marine Reserve was included in the list of Natural Heritage Sites.

Since its existence, the Galapagos National park has developed a series of rules and regulations to protect the Islands and minimize the impact of tourists on the Islands.

All tourists who visit the islands on a cruise, or who take daily tours out to the islands, must be accompanied by Galapagos National Park certified guide on every visit.

The Most Important Rules And Regulations Of The Galapagos National Park Are The Following:

Always follow the marked trail and never leave it.
Do not touch the animals.
Do not take souvenirs from the islands.
Do not get too close to animals.
Do not litter.
Do not smoke on the islands.
Do not take food to the islands.
Clean your shoes' soles before disembarking in the islands. You may have carried some seeds endemic to one island and would not want to introduce them to another.
Always stay together with your group.

Snorkeling And Scuba Diving In The Galapagos

The Galapagos Islands are home to a vast amount of wildlife and fauna. Tourists are attracted by the numerous snorkeling and scuba diving sites.

Radiant fish and bizarre animals populate the waters around the Galapagos and exhilarate divers and snorkelers. Swept by both the cold waters of Antarctica and warm currents from the tropical Pacific, the Galapagos' colorful marine life embodies an unusual mixture of species.

The Galapagos waters are cool and are as low as 10 degrees C. Although the average water temperature is nearer 18 degrees C throughout most of the year.

The warm season between about December and March usually brings warmer waters of around 23 degrees C. Divers must bring an appropriate diving suit.

There Are 2 Diving Options

1) You stay on one of the inhabited islands and make day trips with one of the dive centres operating in the area.

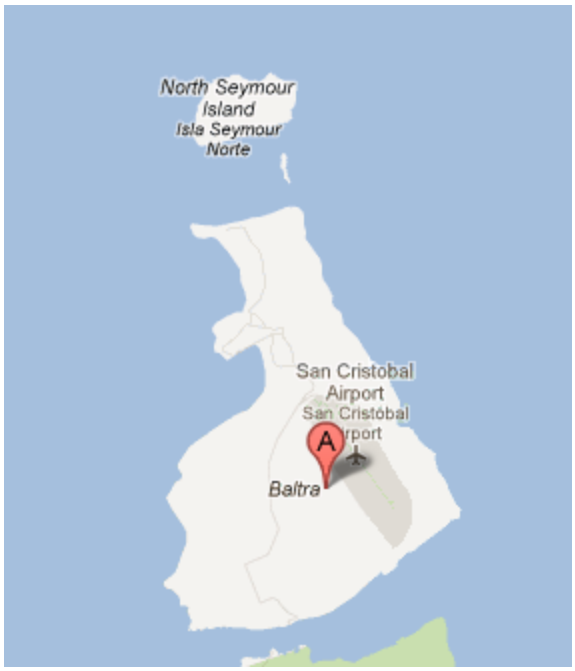
2) You make a 7 to 10 day trip on a dive-live aboard.

Dive Boats And Live boards

Galapagos does not offer a large selection of dive boats and live aboard operators. The dive tours on the Galapagos are always run on a tight schedule. Where and when you dive is planned and specially, on the live boards you do not get much choice in the matter.

Baltra Island

Baltra island is also known as South Seymour island. The island is very arid.

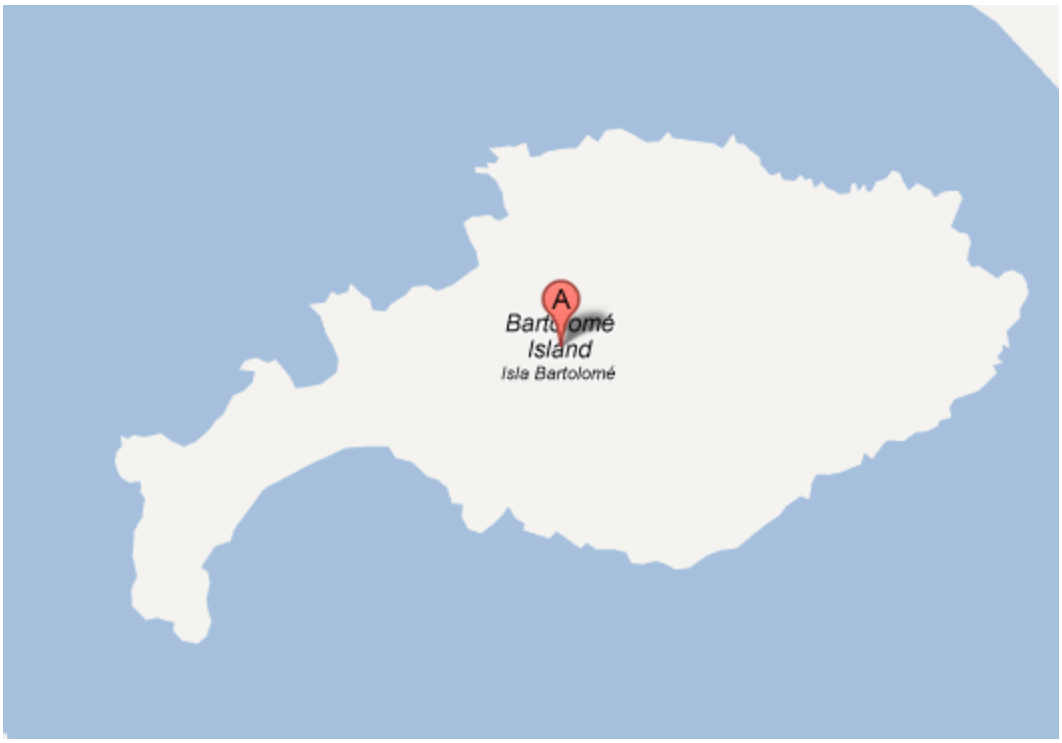


Plants To See On The Island

Salt Bushes
Prickly Pear Cacti
Palo Santo Trees

Bartolomé Island

The island is also known as Bartholomew Island.



Birds To See On The Island

Galapagos Penguin

Mammals And Reptiles To See On The Island

The Green Turtle

Daphne Major

This island is very inaccessible. It is important as the location of multi decade finch population studies.

Birds To See On The Island

Finches

Darwin Island

This island is named after Charles Darwin. It is also known as Culpepper Island.

Birds To See On The Island

Swallow-tailed Gulls
Frigates
Red-footed Boobies
Nazca Boobies

Mammals And Reptiles To See On The Island

Fur Seals
Marine Iguanas
Sea Lions
Whales
Marine Turtles

Española Island

Española has a large number of endemic species. The island is also known as Hood Island.

Birds To See On The Island

Mockingbird
Waved Albatross – the only place where they nest

Mammals And Reptiles To See On The Island

Lava Lizard
Tortoise
Marine Iguanas - they exhibit a distinctive red coloration change during the breeding season

Gardner Bay

Gardner Bay offers opportunities for swimming, snorkeling and a great beach.

Punta Suarez

Birds To See At Punta Suarez

Hood Mockingbirds
Swallow-tailed Gulls
Blue-footed Boobies
Nazca Boobies
Ted-billed Tropicbirds

Waved Albatross
3 species of Darwin's Finches
Galápagos Hawks

Mammals And Reptiles To See At Punta Suarez

Marine Iguanas
Española Lava Lizards

Floreana Island

Floreana island is also known as Charles or Santa María island. It is the 6th largest island.

Things To See And Do On The Island

Snorkeling (There Are 3 Snorkeling Sites On The Northern Coast)

Post Office Bay

This bay has a small, white sanded beach.

Of Interest

The remains of a canning factory
A swimming pool
A soccer field
A larva tunnel

Punta Cormorant

The bay has a brown sand bed with a green tint. This green color is from the olivine crystals located in the area. It has a view of a flamingo lagoon.

Mammals And Reptiles To See At Punta Cormorant

Sea Lions
Crabs

Birds To See At Punta Cormorant

Flamingos

Devil's Crown

This is made of the remains of a volcanic cone partially submerged.

Mammals And Reptiles To See At Devil's Crown

Turtles
Rays
White tipped sharks

Genovesa Island

This island is also known as Tower Island and it is not usually on the tourist's itinerary. The island occupies about 14 square kilometres. This island is known as Bird Island, because of the large and varied bird colonies which nest here.

Birds To See On The Island

Frigate birds
Red-footed Boobies
Nazca Boobies
Swallow-tailed Gulls
Storm petrels
Tropicbirds
Darwin’s Finches
Galapagos Mockingbirds

Snorkeling

This is a great place for snorkelling.

The Prince Philip Steps

The Prince Philip Steps are a 1 km trek inland through the Palo Santo vegetation.

Birds To See At The Prince Philip Steps

Swallows
Doves
Numerous seabirds

Short Eared Owls

Darwin Bay

The horse-shoe shaped island has a volcanic caldera whose wall has collapsed. This forms the Great Darwin Bay which is surrounded by cliffs.

Lake Arcturus is filled with salt water and lies in the centre.

To get to Darwin bay there is a ¾ kilometre trail through the mangrove patches.

Mammals And Reptiles To See At Darwin Bay

Sea Lions

Isabela Island

Isabela island is also known as Albemarle Island. Its highest point is Volcán Wolf.

Birds To See On The Island

Galápagos Penguins
Flightless Cormorants
Pelicans
Darwin Finches

Galápagos Hawks
Galápagos Doves

Mammals And Reptiles To See On The Island

Marine Iguanas
Land Iguanas
Sally Lightfoot Crabs
Galápagos Tortoises

Plants To See On The Island

Very interesting lowland vegetation grows on this island

Puerto Villamil

Puerto Villamil is home to the third largest settlement. It is the only island to have the equator run across it.

Marchena Island

Marchena island is also known as Bindloe Island. It was named after Fray Antonio Marchena.

Birds To See On The Island

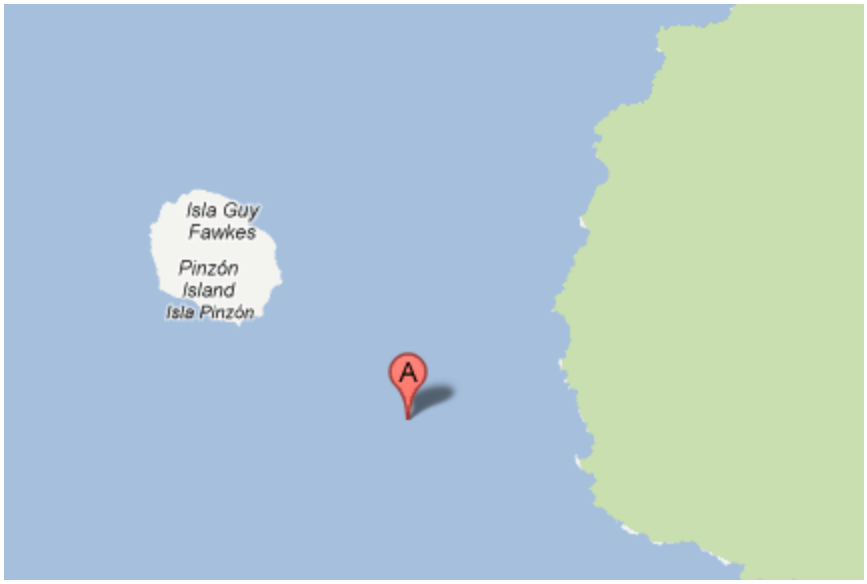
Galápagos Hawks

Mammals And Reptiles To See On The Island

Sea Lions
Marchena Lava Lizard

Nameless Island

This is a small islet used mostly for scuba diving.



North Seymour Island

It was named after an English nobleman Lord Hugh Seymour.

Birds To See On The Island

Blue-footed Boobies
Swallow-tailed Gulls
Frigates

Pinta Island

This island is also known as Bingdon Island. Pinta Island was home to the last remaining Pinta tortoise called Lonesome George but he has died.

Birds To See On The Island

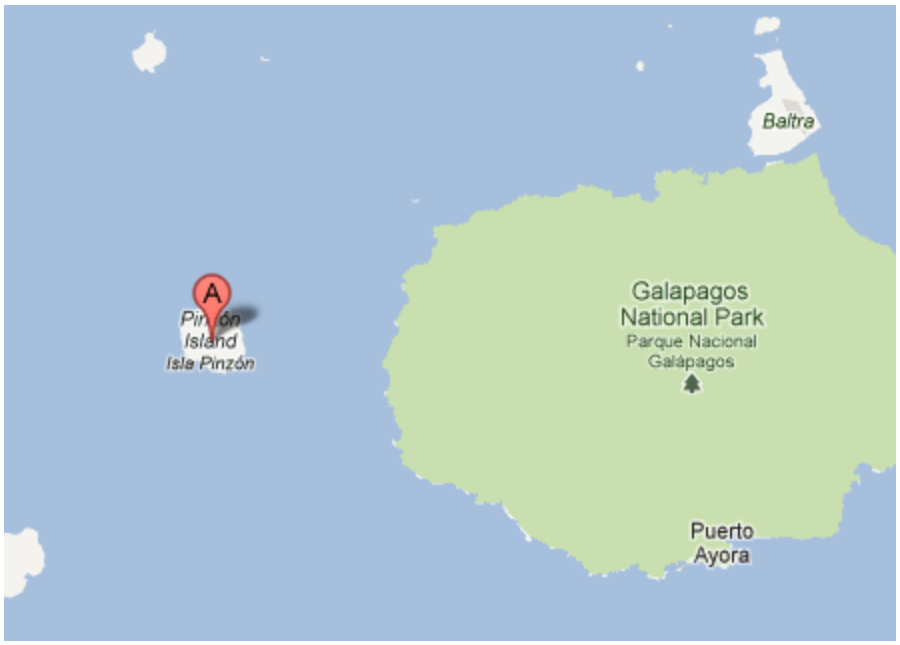
Galápagos Hawks

Mammals And Reptiles To See On The Island

Sea Lions
Giant Tortoises
Marine Iguanas
Dolphins

Pinzón Island

Pinzón Island is also known as Duncan Island. This island was named after the Pinzón brothers, the captains of the Pinta and Niña caravel.



Rábida Island

Rábida Island is also known as Jervis Island. The high amount of iron contained in the lava at Rábida gives it a distinctive red color.

Birds To See On The Island

White-cheeked Pintail Ducks
Brown Pelicans
Boobies
9 Species Of Finches

San Cristobel Island

San Cristóbal island is also known as Chatham island. It allows a visitor to see how the environment and its inhabitants interact.

The capital is Puerto Baquerizo Moreno and you can reach this island by boat from Puerto Ayora or by plane from Baltra.

Things To See And Do On The Island

Colonial architecture and plantations to visit
Freshwater lagoon and extensive beach – great for snorkeling

Santa Cruz Island

Santa Cruz is also known as Indefatigable Island.

Puerto Ayora

Puerto Ayora has the largest human population in the archipelago.

The Charles Darwin Research Station

The CDRS and the headquarters of the Galápagos National Park Service are located here. They operate a tortoise breeding centre on the island.

The Highlands

The highlands offer exuberant flora and are famous for the lava tunnels.

Birds To See On The Island

Flamingos

Mammals And Reptiles To See On The Island

Tortoises
Land Iguanas
Sea Turtles
Rays
Sharks

Black Turtle Cove

This is a site surrounded by mangroves.

Mammals And Reptiles To See At Black Turtle Cove

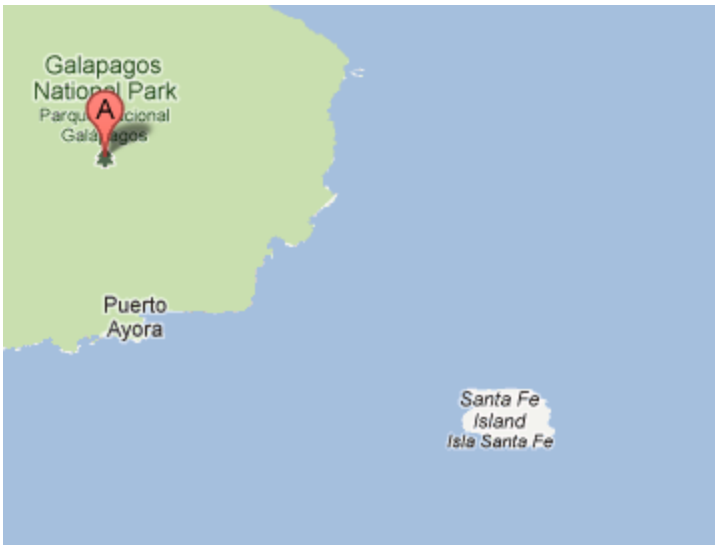
Sea Turtles
Rays
Small Sharks

Cerro Dragón

It is known for its flamingo lagoon.

Santa Fé Island

Santa Fé Island is also known as Barrington Island. Santa Fe hosts a forest of Opuntia cactus.



Birds To See On The Island

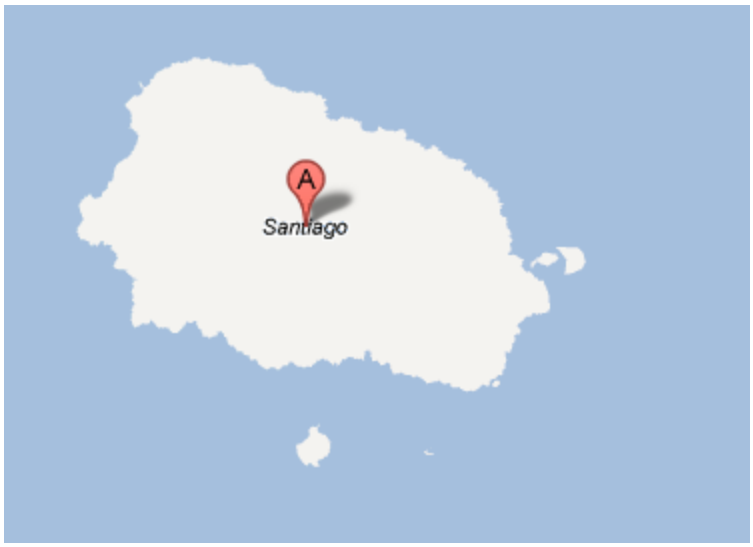
Swallow-tailed Gulls
Red-billed Tropic Birds
Shear-waters Petrels

Mammals And Reptiles To See On The Island

Land Iguanas
Lava Lizards

Santiago Island

Santiago Island is also known as San Salvador Island or James Island.



Birds To See On The Island

Darwin Finches
Galápagos Hawks
Flamingos

Mammals And Reptiles To See On The Island

Marine Iguanas
Sea Lions
Fur Seals
Land And Sea Turtles
Dolphins
Sharks

Sulivan Bay

A recent pahoehoe lava flow can be observed.

South Plaza Island

It is named in honor of a former president of Ecuador - General Leonidas Plaza.

Plants To See On The Island

Opuntia Cactus
Sesuvium Plants

Birds To See On The Island

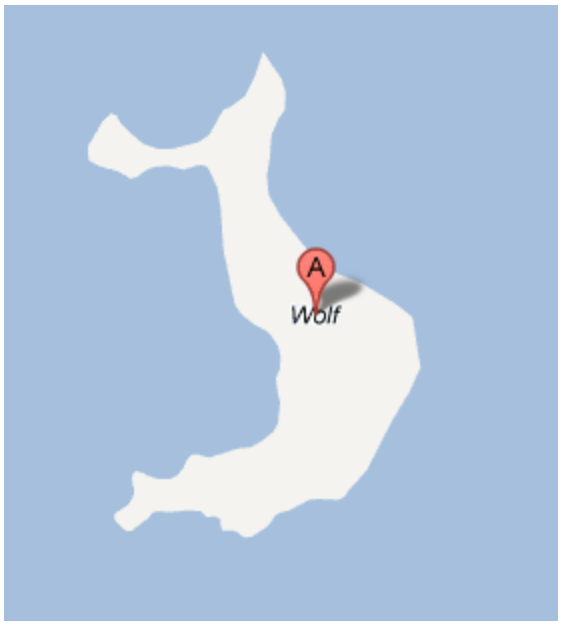
Tropic Birds
Swallow-tailed Gulls

Mammals And Reptiles To See On The Island

Land Iguanas
Marine Iguanas
Hybrids Species Of Land And Marine Iguanas

Wolf Island

Wolf Island is also known as Wenman Island.



Birds To See On The Island

Frigates
Nazca Boobies
Red-footed boobies
Swallow-tailed Gulls
Vampire Finches (this bird is only found on this island and it feeds on blood pecked from other birds)

Mammals And Reptiles To See On The Island

Fur Seals
Marine Iguanas
Sharks
Whales
Dolphins

Cruises In The Galapagos Islands

There are a variety of high quality cruise companies that offer personal boats or smaller ocean liners for the unique experience of seeing the Galápagos islands.

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